



# Questions and Answers about the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)

## Student and Parent Notification

**When must students and their parents receive written notification of the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) requirement? Must notification be provided to parents of students who have passed the test?**

Students and their parents/guardians must receive written notification of the CAHSEE requirement at the commencement of ninth grade, and each year thereafter. For transfer students, notice must be provided at the time the student transfers (Education Code section 60850(f)(1)). This notice is to be included with other information that the local governing board is required to send home to all parents at the beginning of the regular school year. (See Education Code section 48980).

## Student Preparation/Scheduling

**Are the test preparation restrictions on CAHSEE similar to those for STAR?**

No. There is nothing in state law that limits test preparation for the CAHSEE. The STAR norm-reference test (NRT) has a test preparation policy due to the nature of those tests and the need for test security of the items that are used over multiple years. The STAR content standards tests and the CAHSEE are standards-based, and it is quite appropriate to teach to the standards. This means that no test preparation policy is deemed necessary.

A student study guide will be available in spring 2003. Additionally, teacher guides for English-language arts and mathematics are available on the CAHSEE Web site: [www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/cahsee](http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/cahsee). The teacher guides include guidelines for assessing the standards and sample test questions as well as the scoring guides and test blueprints.

## Test Administration

**May we offer the CAHSEE to ninth grade students?**

No. State law, Education Code Section 60851(b), states: "A pupil may take the high school exit examination in grade 9 in the 2000–01 school year only. Each pupil shall take the high school exit examination in grade 10 beginning in the 2001–02 school year and may take the examination during each subsequent administration, until each section of the examination has been passed."

**Can a district decide on which CAHSEE test administration dates they will test students? Can they decide to change these dates annually?**

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction has established CAHSEE test dates every other month through September 2004. The test dates are arranged to accommodate schools that have students on multiple tracks throughout the year. The only way to ensure compliance with the law is to schedule students to retake the test after their scores have been received. Therefore, test administrations should be scheduled four months apart (e.g., March, July, November). No student may take any portion of the test that he or she has previously passed.

**What if a student is absent at the time the school is administering the CAHSEE?**

The California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 1204, requires districts to first offer the exam to tenth grade students in the spring testing cycle. This section states that if the grade 10 student is absent on the spring administration dates (March/May), "the school district must offer a make-up test at the next test date designated by the superintendent of public instruction (e.g., May/July) or on the next designated test date selected by the school district." Students in grades 11 and 12 who are absent on the scheduled testing date, should be scheduled to take the test on the district's next designated testing date.



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***Is each school district expected to offer the CAHSEE three times a year? Must it be offered more often so that each student has three opportunities? Will all students have the same number of opportunities to pass the CAHSEE?***

Students who progress through a California high school at a normal pace from grade 10 through grade 12 may have up to eight opportunities to pass the CAHSEE. Students who do not progress through a California high school at a normal pace from grade 10 through grade 12 (e.g., students who transfer from out of state, students on an accelerated track, or students who repeat a grade) may have additional or fewer opportunities to pass the CAHSEE.

Districts are required to offer the test once to tenth graders in the spring and are encouraged to provide up to seven additional opportunities to students who have not passed the CAHSEE. However, students are not required to take the test at each additional opportunity offered by the district.

The law specifies that no student shall retake any portion of the exam that he or she has already passed. Therefore, students may only be scheduled for retesting if they have not passed one or both sections of the CAHSEE previously. Students at risk of not passing, or who have not passed one or both parts of the test, are to be offered supplemental instruction that provides remediation in the content area(s) of difficulty.

Districts cannot offer the test more than three times per year to eleventh and twelfth graders because of the timeline for receiving score reports and ordering for the next testing date. Students would not receive score reports back prior to the deadline for ordering the next test, so testing the same students more than once during a testing cycle (e.g., July/September) would not be feasible or allowable under the law.

***Can a district deny a student from taking the test if the student does not sign up for the test?***

A student should not have to sign up for the CAHSEE. The district is responsible for ordering test materials for all tenth graders and for providing additional opportunities to take the test to all students who have not yet passed it. If the student shows up on the testing date, the school must verify the student's pass/no pass status. If testing materials and logistics permit and if the student still needs to pass one or both parts, the school should allow the student to take the test.

***Can the California Department of Education (CDE) please clarify the question of schools collecting present school Average Daily Attendance (ADA) if the CAHSEE is administered during summer school hours or in an intersession?***

Schools may not collect ADA for the administration of the CAHSEE if the test is administered outside of summer school. Students should be attending summer school and the CAHSEE should be scheduled as part of summer school. If the CAHSEE has to be offered after summer school is completed, the district may be eligible to be reimbursed for supplemental instruction money. For further information, contact Shelley Goode, Principal Apportionments, in the Department at (916) 324-4530 or [sgoode@cde.ca.gov](mailto:sgoode@cde.ca.gov) (Internet).

***What are the deadlines for ordering testing materials for each administration?***

All ordering deadlines through June 2003 are available through the "Project Calendar" link on the Educational Testing Service (ETS) CAHSEE Web site at <http://www.ets.org/cahsee/>.



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## ***At what time in the school day should schools begin the CAHSEE administration?***

To ensure the security of the CAHSEE, all schools are strongly encouraged to begin the administration of the test between 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. on the test day. Schools should follow this procedure unless it is not feasible to begin the test during this time frame. Schools must follow all other administration procedures specified in the test administration manual. If students arrive after the start of testing, the test site administrator should have a predetermined policy for handling late students. For example, a school could choose to test late students in a separate room. Again, any such policy should be determined locally and made clear to all potential test takers in advance so that students are aware of the consequences for being tardy on testing days.

In cases where the school cannot begin the CAHSEE before 10:00 a.m., the district CAHSEE coordinator must contact ETS to inform them of the irregular administration schedule. This also will increase the likelihood that the school will be monitored by ETS test security.

## ***How can districts order materials for the next test administration when the preidentification (pre-ID) deadline occurs before the previous test administration results have been returned?***

Educational Testing Service (ETS), the testing contractor, is modifying the process to notify districts of student results more quickly. In addition, now that districts have had experience administering the CAHSEE, they should be able to estimate how many students will be taking the test based on prior pass rates.

## ***Are the format codes for pre-ID the same for CAHSEE, STAR, CELDT, etc. to allow districts to have only one file? Will all the demographic changes for STAR also occur on the CAHSEE pre-ID file? If yes, how soon?***

CDE is attempting to make the pre-ID file as uniform as possible. However, the format will vary a bit for

different tests. Identical fields for the state tests will be in the same file location; however, each test may have unique fields. The format also will vary as the schedules for implementation in the tests vary. For example, a significantly new pre-ID format will be used for STAR in spring 2003. CAHSEE will use the same format as used in prior tests for March and May 2003 tests and move to the new format in July 2003.

The new format will have a one-character identifier at the beginning of the record that indicates the test type. We are also aligning codes with CSIS for the July CAHSEE pre-ID.

## **Special Education**

### ***Districts have been told that CAHSEE can be taken with accommodations or modifications listed in the IEP. Is this a change in policy in regard to modifications and is a waiver process in place?***

From the outset, there has been no change in allowing a student to take the CAHSEE with any accommodation/modification listed in the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan. Students must be allowed to take the test with the accommodations and/or modifications specified in their IEP or Section 504 Plan for testing. The answer to the question about the waiver process is yes, the waiver process is in place. Additional details about the waiver process and the changes that will take place January 1, 2003 are posted on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/waiver>. Senate Bill 1476 (Ch. 808, September 2002), which moves the waiver process to the local school district governing board, does require that the IEP or Section 504 Plan be "in place that requires the accommodations or modifications to be provided to the pupil when taking the high school exit examination."

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***Is a calculator an acceptable modification if it is listed in a student's IEP or 504 plan? If a calculator is used, will the student receive an invalid score?***

Students who have an IEP or Section 504 Plan that specifies the use of a calculator for testing must be permitted to use one.

Modifications are defined as any variation in the assessment environment or process that fundamentally alters what the test measures or affects the comparability of scores. A calculator has been determined to be a modification. A student who takes one or both portions of the test with a modification and obtains a score of 350 or higher has obtained a score equivalent to a passing score. The score report will be marked "not valid" for the applicable portion of the test because the use of a modification changes the constructs of the test (what the test is measuring) and the comparability of test scores.

However, the school district may submit a request for a waiver of the requirement to successfully pass one or both parts of the CAHSEE to the State Board of Education (SBE) prior to January 1, 2003 (and to the local school district governing board after January 1, 2003) for students who have taken the CAHSEE with a modification and received the equivalent of a passing score. A list of accommodations and modifications may be found on the CAHSEE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/cahsee>.

***What is the new role of local boards of education with regard to approving CAHSEE waivers?***

Senate Bill 1476 (Ch. 808, September 2002) explains in detail the role of local boards of education in the decision to grant waivers. In summary, at the request of a parent or guardian, a school principal shall submit a request for a waiver of the requirement to successfully pass the CAHSEE to the school district governing board for a student with a disability who has taken the CAHSEE with modifications that alter what the test measures and has received the equivalent of a passing

score on one or both parts of the exam (mathematics and English-language arts). For the governing board to waive the exam, the principal must certify to the governing board that the pupil has all of the following:

"(1) An individualized education program adopted pursuant to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) or a plan adopted pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794(a)) in place that requires the accommodations or modifications to be provided to the pupil when taking the high school exit examination.

(2) Sufficient high school level coursework either satisfactorily completed or in progress in a high school level curriculum sufficient to have attained the skills and knowledge otherwise needed to pass the high school exit examination.

(3) An individual score report for the pupil showing that the pupil has received the equivalent of a passing score on the high school exit examination while using a modification that fundamentally alters what the high school exit examination measures as determined by the State Board of Education."

***Are special education students enrolled in resource specialist classes rather than regular education classes for math or English on track for a high school diploma?***

The student's IEP or Section 504 Plan team must answer this question. The IEP or Section 504 Plan team should outline realistic goals for the student and the specific methods by which the student is likely to achieve these goals. Students considered "on track" to receive a high school diploma should be receiving instruction in the content standards adopted by the SBE. All students will have to take and pass the CAHSEE to get a high school diploma. The CAHSEE is based on the SBE-adopted content standards in mathematics and English-language arts.



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## English Learners

### ***Do English learners who enter the California public school system as ninth graders have to pass the CAHSEE?***

Yes. Education Code Section 60852 requires that “if a school district determines that a pupil does not possess sufficient English language skills to be assessed by the CAHSEE, the district may defer the requirement that the pupil pass the CAHSEE for a period up to 24 calendar months of enrollment in the California public school system until the student has completed six months of instruction in reading, writing, and comprehension in the English language.” The student is still required to take the CAHSEE during this time.

## Adult Education

### ***Must adult education students graduating in 2004 pass the CAHSEE? What if they started high school in 1990, dropped out, and came back in 2002–03?***

Adult education students have to pass the CAHSEE in order to receive a high school diploma in the 2003–04 school year or thereafter. California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Sections 1205 and 1206, require school districts to maintain a record of all pupils and adult students who participate in the CAHSEE, including whether each pupil or adult student has satisfied the requirement to successfully pass one or both portions of the CAHSEE. Districts are to maintain this information in the pupil or adult student’s permanent record.

### ***When do we notify adult education students about the requirement to pass the CAHSEE?***

The Education Code only specifies what is considered adequate notice for pupils and transfer pupils in a K–12 program. Education Code Section 52504 requires that “classes for adults shall conform to any course of

study and graduation requirements otherwise imposed by law or under the authority of law.” Schools should notify adult education students of the requirement at the time they enroll in a program leading to a high school diploma.

## Scoring & Reporting

### ***If students transfer into a district without a record of having passed the CAHSEE, do they retake it or is there a way to track down their results from the state? Can there be a central repository to request scores for transfer students?***

CAHSEE state regulations require school districts to keep in the student’s permanent record the date on which the pupil or adult student took the exam and whether the pupil or adult student has satisfied the requirement to successfully pass one or both portions of the CAHSEE (CCR Section 1206). This information must be available in records that follow students when they transfer to other school districts. Students only should re-take those portions of the CAHSEE that they have not yet passed. CDE is not allowed to maintain individual student records because of privacy laws.

### ***To calculate cumulative pass rates for the class of 2004, which enrollment figure should districts use? Fall or spring enrollment?***

At this point, CDE is using CBEDS grade 10 as of October 2001 for statewide cohort calculations. Districts may use enrollment figures they deem best for internal purposes. (Enrollment reported in March and/or May tests will be used in the API calculations).



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## Graduation Questions

***If a student does not graduate in the 2002-03 school year because he/she does not have enough credits and is scheduled to attend summer school to earn the needed credits to receive a diploma, does the student have to take the CAHSEE?***

No. The CAHSEE requirement is only for students graduating in the 2003–04 school year and thereafter and applies only to those students who received notice of the test at the commencement of grade 9 and each year thereafter, or who took the CAHSEE in grade 10.

***Is the requirement for twelfth graders to pass the CAHSEE, beginning with the 2003–2004 school year, going to be changed to a later date?***

Education Code Sections 60857–60859 (added by AB 1609, Statutes of 2001) require a study to examine whether the test development process for the CAHSEE and the implementation of standards-based instruction meet the required standards for a test of this nature. A final report will be delivered to the SBE on or before May 1, 2003. Upon review of the report on this study, the SBE may delay the date on which each pupil completing grade 12 is required to pass the CAHSEE. The SBE must make its decision by August 1, 2003.

## General Questions

***Is there any information showing that failure on the CAHSEE leads to an increase in dropout rates?***

No. The most recent report from the independent evaluator of the CAHSEE states: “Available evidence suggests that the CAHSEE has not yet had any impact on retention, dropout rates, or expectations for graduation and post-high-school plans.”

***Are any CAHSEE resources available in Spanish?***

Yes. CAHSEE resources for parents are available in Spanish through the “Resources in Spanish” link on CDE’s CAHSEE Web site at [www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/cahsee](http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/cahsee).

***Will the CAHSEE for the class of 2005 be the same as the CAHSEE for the class of 2004?***

The test questions change for each administration. However, the CAHSEE blueprints directing which mathematics and English-language arts content standards are addressed for the test are the same for all administrations; therefore, the test is developed to be comparable in terms of the standards tested for each administration. Technical comparability is achieved through equating and scaling the CAHSEE after each test administration. Only if the SBE adopts new blueprints would the scope of the test change. Until that time, each class is held to the same standards.